1: Underhill E-5 (1931-1935)1946 NU28 Papago NU28

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# THE SALT PILGRIMAGE

ALONG the northern beaches of the Gulf of California there are salt deposits, left in the low sandy stretches by the high tides. The country is waterless and uninhabited, and few whites have penetrated it even to the present day. Records have been left of this forbidding waste of sand dunes by Kino, by Anza,[1] and later by Lumholtz,[2] and all thought they were lucky to get themselves and their animals through alive. But the Papago, since prehistoric times, have been visiting this wilderness to fetch salt, both for use and for trade. Velarde reports: "There is salt in the inlets on the coast. The Pimas take some to distribute to friends and relatives, especially the Pimas of the west (Papago). Those of the north care little about it." [3]

To this day the Papago continue their pilgrimages to the salt beds.[4] They have, through the centuries, worked out routes which take them past the few hidden "tanks," or rocky reservoirs, of rain water to be found in the wastes of sand. Even so, the last lap of the journey which brings them to the gulf must be made with no other drinking water than that in their canteens. Though they take canny means to compass the journey safely, they make no attempt to minimize its hardships. Rather, these are emphasized to the last degree and used as an occasion for heroism. Even in the days of gourd canteens, they carried only the minimal quantity of water. Now that they have horses, they use them neither for carrying extra water nor extra quantities of salt. They fast voluntarily, almost to starvation.

[1] Bolton, 1930, I, 90. [2] Lumholtz, 1912, pp. 196–254. [3] Velarde, Sec. 2, p. 127.

[4] The Pima do not make the salt pilgrimage, but my they always traded for salt with the Papago.

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ritual recitations and guide his party through a long series of ceremonial acts. He was usually chosen by the former leader from among the older men who had many trips to their credit, and he was expected to learn his duties by observation *en route*. As a leader grew old, he would begin to enlist the assistance of one of the more mature men, and finally the latter would step into his place without further formality. According to Papago pattern, the chosen assistant was a relative if possible.

The season for fetching salt was summer, after the high tides of spring had left a deposit on the beach. At this time the leader, after consultation with the keeper of the smoke, announced a meeting and told the conditions of the trip. "Now we are going down there. You will follow and obey everything. If you are lucky, you will be a good singer, a hunter, a fighter, a shaman."(1)

Young men with their careers before them volunteered for the expedition, especially if they had not had a chance to go to war, for salt gathering ranked almost with war as an opportunity for dreaming and acquiring power. Having volunteered for his first trip, a man must continue to go for four successive years or he would be ill. During these first four trips he ranked as a neophyte and must be purified on his return. Afterward purification was shorter, but he observed the ceremonial restrictions on the trail. After ten trips, there were no restrictions or purification, and he was eligible as a leader.

Any village which had decided on a trip would send messengers to its neighbors, inviting recruits. The neighbors held meetings in their turn and reported the number of volunteers; then a date was set when all the parties should meet at the first stop along the way. If there were many men, the date might be eight days later; if only a few, four days. From the night of the meeting all the future pilgrims remained sexually continent. The neophytes practiced running, since when they reached the ocean it was by running that they would obtain a vision. They collected their equipment, which must all be new, since used property might have come under the influence of a menstruating woman.

Since the coming of horses, a horse has been the first requisite for the salt pilgrimage. But the Papago use this convenience spar-

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ingly. Each man took only one horse, rode it to the salt beds, loaded it, and walked home. Each pilgrim must keep his horse fresh for the trip. If he had none, he might borrow, and no one would dare refuse. The compensation to the horse's owner was half a load of salt, or one saddlebagfull. The saddlebags taken were the ancient netted receptacles of maguey fiber. Inside these the salt was wrapped in handwoven cotton sheets or, in old days, fiber mats. Each pilgrim must make ropes of hair or of maguey fiber, for a bridle and for hobbling his horse. He wore, in the old days, only breech cloth and sandals. At his waist he carried two canteens, made of gourds, covered with rabbit skin, and slung in a grass net. He also carried a pouch of parched corn meal and the small watertight basket which was his only utensil for eating and drinking. Beside the corn meal, "ripe men" might carry as much dried squash, tortillas, or any other food as they could manage.

For all equipment there was a special vocabulary, analogous to that used on the warpath. The horse was called the partner; the gourd, the jar; the basket, the dish; pinole, gruel; hay, weeds; salt, corn. For other common terms there were words showing a similar slight variation. These words the neophyte must learn and not misuse, under pain of accident on the journey.

Each village took prayer sticks in some form, to be offered to the ocean. The following list will show the variety introduced under the general heading prayer-stick offering:

*Komarik:* prayer sticks with two turkey or eagle feathers. Left at each camping place, and one thrown by each man into the sea.

*Pisinimo:* eagle down; no sticks. Each man brings his own down and throws it into the sea.

*Awegam and Santa Rosa:* peeled white sticks of western willow; no feathers. Carried by leader. One placed at every camp, and one given each man to throw in the sea.

*Akchin:* sticks with turkey or eagle feathers carried by leader, placed at each camp along the way and given men to carry into the sea and to bring back again. One large stick, with streamer of red cloth, planted on the beach.

*San Miguel:* strips of red cloth thrown into ocean.

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All the villages took sacred corn meal as an offering. It must be made from flat-headed corn (two ears growing together, so that each had one flat side). Each man brought his own in a small pouch of rabbit skin carried at the waist.

During the period of preparation a meeting was held every night, at which the leader received reports of progress. When the last day arrived the leader asked: "Are you ready? Is everything new?" Next morning, when the dawn star rose, they started.

## THE JOURNEY

There were two accessible salt deposits, reached by different routes. One route led straight south, through Quijotoa and Sharp Mountain, requiring only two days and a half. However, this meant forced marches, when the men had sometimes to travel half the night in order to reach the one camp which had water. The village of Akchin, which followed this route, took the minimum time for ceremonials and recited no long speeches. The other route led west to Ajo Mountain and then south, past the present Pinacate. This took four days; Santa Rosa and Anegam, which followed it, had long rituals for each of the watering places.

They rode single file, with the leader ahead "like a quail with her young." All the contingencies of the journey were dealt with by forms of sympathetic magic. They must never step off the trail, for that might "ruin somebody's [some animal's] house," and the animal would become their enemy. They must never think of home and their women, for this would delay their progress. For the same reason, they must always sleep with their heads to the ocean that it might "draw them on." They must never spill a drop of the precious water from their canteens, or they would be punished by a flood. This happened to one informant. As a result, the party had to ride in a cloudburst, and they found the salt beds so flooded that they could scarcely excavate any salt.(4)

They observed the usual ceremonial restriction of speaking slowly and in a low voice, and Santa Rosa men were not allowed to speak at all.(4) For the neophytes there were other rules. They must obey every direction instantly and must never walk, but al-

1: Underhill E-5 (1931-1935)1946 NU28 Papago NU28



saw the mountain ahead of him revolving, and composed a series of songs about it which made him one of the popular leaders for the skipping dance. A legendary case recounts the story of a hero who heard a voice call to him: "The sea shaman wants to see you." He went into a cave, where he was taught songs, and when he emerged found that four years had passed. His house and property had been destroyed, as at death, and his wife considered herself a widow. But he was now a powerful shaman, so highly paid that he soon made good the losses.

There are no tales of men who failed to receive a vision. The aids to the experience, both material and spiritual, were so many that few could fail to have some sight or some emotion that might be regarded as a message from the supernatural. In the subsequent weeks of fasting this could easily magnify itself into a vision.

The runners returned late at night, and the leader waited for them. Speech No. 8 describes him sitting, half dead with cold and weariness. They gave him the objects they had picked up, which must be purified before their power could be used.

## PURIFICATION

Early next morning they loaded the horses and left, adjuring the salt to be light, when they placed it in the saddlebags. As they turned to go home, the leader addressed the ocean: "I shall now return. Do you make it easy! Blow me along that I may arrive safely." They started with the elders ahead, then the neophytes, and last the leader, "to push them with his power." They must not look back or think of the salt, because this would impede their journey. They might hear singing behind them, which was the ocean trying to tempt them, but if they heeded it, they would be unable to move. The prohibition against noise was particularly rigid. "It would make the ocean angry." The neophytes must use their scratching sticks and, at the first opportunity, cut new ones to replace those which had been touched by ocean air.

On nearing the home village, they camped just outside, so that they could make an entry in the morning, and sent a messenger to

4: Joseph et al D, E-5 (1942-1943) 1949
NU28 Papago NU28

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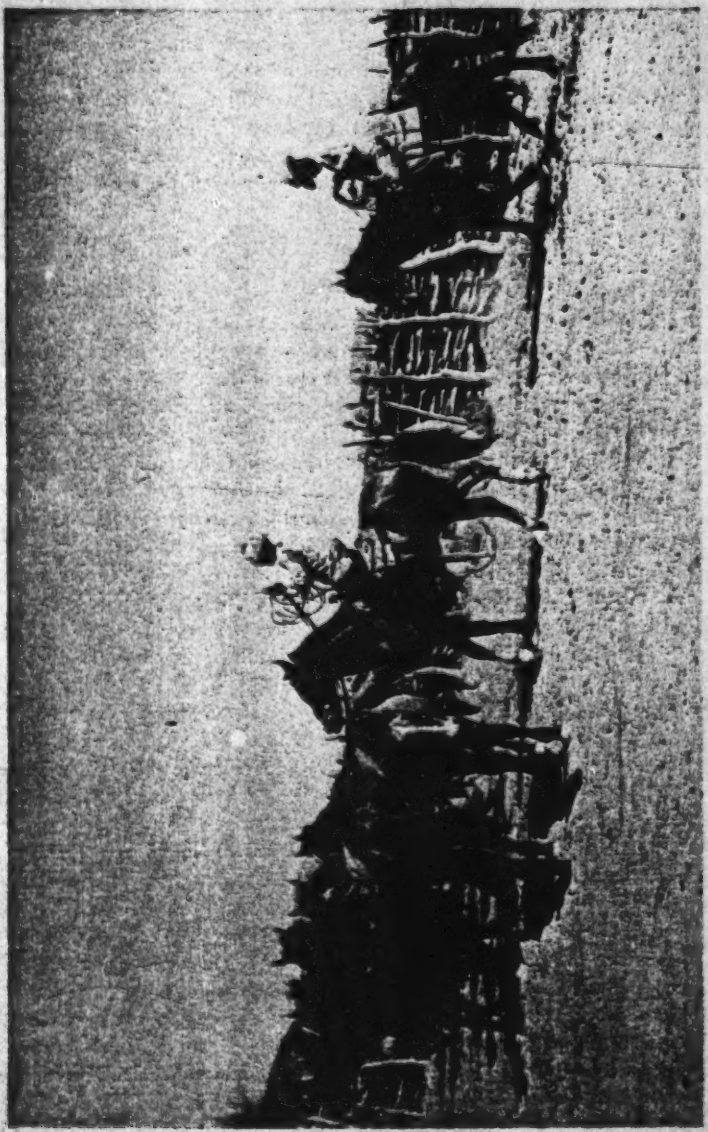
PLATE IV



ROUNDING UP THE HORSES IN THE CORRAL

Chas. Abel

4: Joseph et al D,E-5 (1942-1943) 1949
NU28 Papago NU28

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PLATE XIII

YOUNG COWBOY

[p. 134]

6: Densmore E-5 (1920) 1929NU28 Papago NU28



484 317 [823] of "medicine power" from the ocean. The commercial expeditions were made by many people and while the journey was long and hard it was not surrounded by the regulations which made the latter type of expedition a severe test of a man's physical endurance. The ocean was regarded with reverence and a man must undergo a severe ordeal in order to come into communication with it and to receive power from it. However, his journey and that of the seeker for salt had a few points in common, both being required to run four times around the bed of salt (*anta*) and to remain in isolation four days after their return, observing the usual customs of a fasting period.

484 317 439 [497] The Papago used salt in the widespread commerce of the tribe. It was an article of barter with the Pima on the north and was also sold in Mexico, where the Sonora Mining Co. bought about 20,000 pounds annually from these Indians.[85] In 1920 an old couple was still passing through Sells, Ariz., every year with a supply of salt which was obtained from the salt deposits and carried on the backs of their burros. The salt deposit was said to be about 2 miles from the Gulf of California and about 130 miles from the southern part of the Papago reservation. Those who went for salt made their camp a little distance from the salt bed and after gathering the salt they ran to the sea and thence to their camp, but they did not go to Hiamorli (or Hiamowitcu), which was the destination of those who sought "medicine power."

484 317 An expedition to secure salt for commercial purposes had its peculiar customs. Mattias Hendricks went with his father on such a trip, the party including one man beside his father. Mattias was then a little boy, but old enough to get the horses in the morning. Those who went for salt usually took two or three pack burros or horses on which to bring back the salt. They made their camp at a distance from the salt bed and when they went to gather the salt they were required to run four times around the salt bed without stopping. The circumference of the salt bed was about a mile and a quarter. When they had done this and performed certain rites they could take the salt. There were some rocks with sharp edges near the place and these were used in scraping aside the fine substance which covered the surface of the salt and was also below it. This substance was called "salt shoes" and did not have a pleasant taste. Mattias Hendricks said he remembered that his father, after breaking through this substance, said to the salt, "Please leave your shoes because you must ride on a burro." The sharp rocks were used also in scraping up the salt. After the men had finished gathering the salt they ran to the sea without stopping and returned to their camp.

[85] Frank Russell, op. cit., p. 94.

7: Lumholtz N-5 (1909-1910) 1912
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him then, but during the following three days he worked at the drawing from memory in his spare time, being mostly occupied in his field and with his cattle. After long deliberation, he finally consented to part with the picture which is shown on plate. The horse is painted with red ochre and the necktie is blue, the color having been bought in an American store. The artist was about fifty years old.

Following a fairly good wagon road eastward through the Comobabi Mountains, I first halted at a rancheria called "Badger's Well," where I found all the old people absent in the sahuaro fields. The younger generation, inclined toward the white man's ways, offered little of interest. They spent much of their time in laughter and animated talk at the well, where they watered their cattle and horses. I noticed a quail creeping stealthily to drink from the overflow of the water, a few yards from the well. Its thirst was quickly satisfied, when it retired to safety among the bushes.

A man sold me a spur made from the cleft of a mezquite bush. It has a very sharp point, which is most efficient, though cruel. Only one foot is thus provided. A negro came along, a rather strange appearance in this part of the country; he told of a silver mine four miles east of there that he and half a dozen of his race owned. It had been found by one of them who had been a prospector for eight years.

There were many ants in my camp, so I was glad to pack up in the morning. A visit was first made to the burial place, which was of the usual unattractive de-

7: Lumholtz N-5 (1909-1910)1912
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285 The lady of the house had in active use two of those
482 peculiar burden baskets called *kibo*, in which the women carry on their backs loads of wood, gourds, or pottery, as the case may be. It consists of an attractive looking net-work of mescal fibre, which has been produced from the leaves after they have been first boiled. The net is attached to a hoop which is fastened between four long poles of sahuaro ribs and is supported by a woven band of strips of zotol leaves that passes over the forehead. This contrivance is getting to be rare in the Papago country, with the introduction of mules and horses, and the woman who owns one is with difficulty induced to sell it. She spends considerable time in its manufacture, and in an old-fashioned family like the present it is of very great
302 usefulness in every-day life. The black twine was from her children's hair, which she cut once a year until they were about twelve years old. I expressed an ardent desire to buy one that was standing outside of the house against the wall, and, after having thought the matter over for a couple of hours, she decided to sell the most used one for five dollars, though she hated to do so; for an additional fifty cents she would mend the net-work and put in a new plaited band for the back and the head. The offer was promptly accepted.

361 Pablo and I made a tour of the houses of the ran-
124 cheria, some of them being three-quarters of a mile away. In two of them we found only old deaf women at home, the rest of the families being at the harvest of the savory cactus fruit. On our return, toward sunset, our Indian
573 friend and little Marianita were busily engaged in wash-

7: Lumholtz N-5 (1909-1910) 1912
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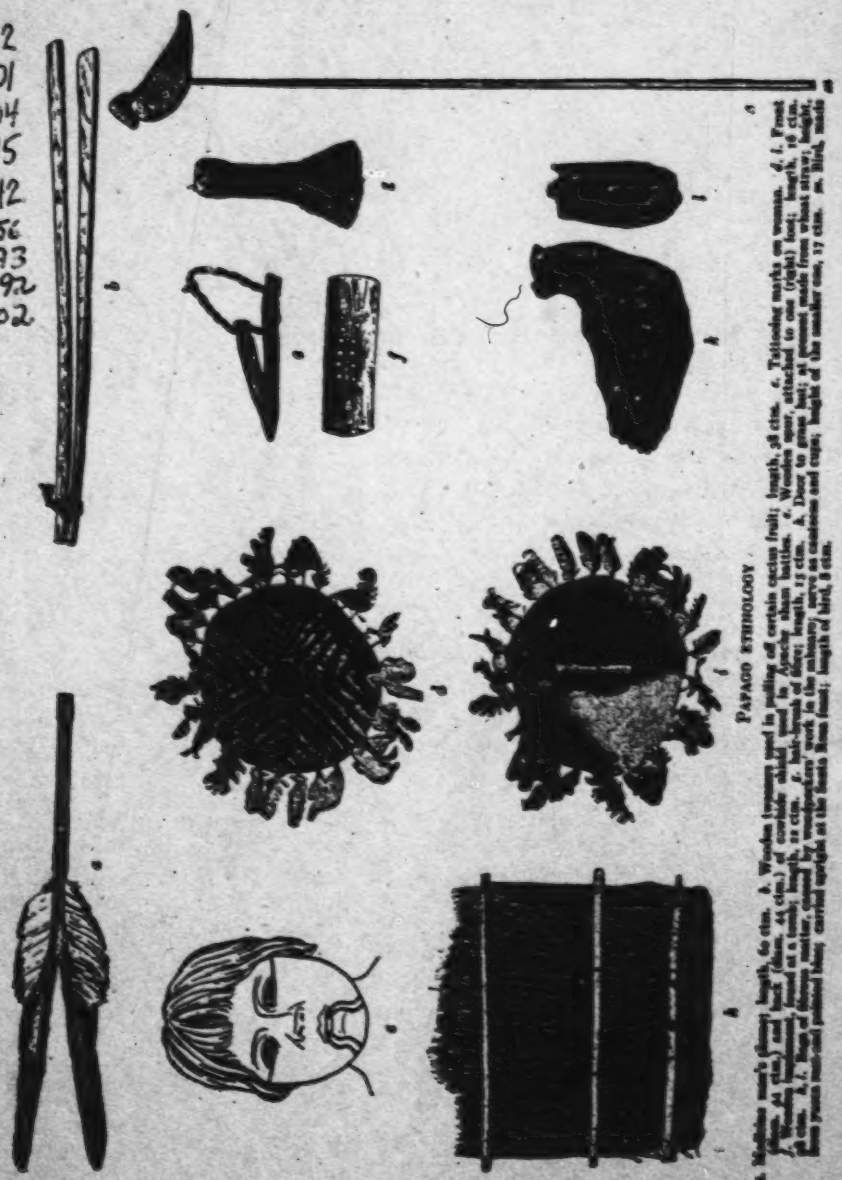

PAPAGO ETHNOLOGY

[Facing p. 110]

7: Lumholtz N-5 (1909-1910) 1912
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312 There should be no great difficulty in making dams, and still less in sinking artesian wells. I was told of a very convenient place for a large dam in the low range north of Temporales, near the boundary line, three or four miles away. This valley averages eight or ten miles in width; a few miles east of Sonoita low mountains draw it together, but below that settlement it widens again. Only the middle part, at a width of one or two miles, probably more at certain places, is serviceable. There may be found a few sandy patches in certain localities, but, taking it all in all, this extensive stretch of tillable soil would be well worth investigating by people interested in agricultural pursuits, and one may expect at no distant date the reclamation of what is now practically a wilderness.

317 At the first Indian rancheria which we passed here, we found that some of the inhabitants had just returned from a salt expedition to the Salina de San Jorge on the Gulf. There were four full loads of salt lying scattered outside of one of the houses. The salt had been placed in discarded flour sacks, two being carried inside of a [192] packing bag of mescal fibre, which is slung over the back of the animal and constitutes a load. Coarse grass is wrapped around each sack for protection, and the bag when in use rests on two rolls of grass, which serve the Papago as pack or riding-saddle, as the case may be.

361 This summer rancheria as well as the next, called [362] Represa de Enrique, is quite populous. At the latter place the Indians possess a large dam. Our arrival COR caused much excitement at first, due to a misapprehen-

7: Lumholtz N-5 (1909-1910) 1912
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PAPAGO: GUADALUPE, MY COMPANION FROM QUITOVAC

PAPAGO: MIGUEL, MEDICINE MAN FROM LA NARIZ

Girl
PARENTS: CHIHAHAN AND YAQUI

Boy
PARENTS: SPANIARD AND PAPAGO

[Facing p. 344]

VIKITA CEREMONY OF THE PAPAGO (CON'T.)

796 534 were forming thus in procession, boys and men, not in costume, brought out bull roarers, and these formed the vanguard, keeping the bull roarers whirling continually.

These bull roarers consisted of two pieces of wood, each about 18" long and about ¼" thick, an inch wide at the upper end and two or more inches wide at the outer end, which was cut to a short point. The pieces were attached to each other by a heavy cord five or six feet long. The sticks were painted, usually with red ochre, with geometric designs in white on them, of hachuring, diagonal lines, diamonds, or bands. A few were painted with white clay, with red decoration.

796 [H92] The wagons fell into line behind the dancers and chorus, some twelve or fifteen of them, dogs and colts trailing along, young bucks on horseback riding up and down. A little over half way to old Santa Rosa the procession halted, and the dancers and chorus marched into a field to the left of the road. Here they rested a few moments, while the men got water to drink, and then sang and danced there in the field for about half an hour. Dancers and choristers alike broke ranks as they pleased and went into the brush, resuming the dance when they returned. The chorus did not march during this dance, although the song was the same as before, but formed in two lines facing each other, one on either side of the framework, which had been laid on the ground. The dancers were grouped just to the north of the ranks. We did not see whether or not the chorus carried any objects during this dance. At the end of this time the procession formed again and resumed its way, preceded by the men and boys with bull roarers.

Just before reaching the plaza at old Santa Rosa, the procession stopped, the wagons going on to the dance ground, the dancers and chorus remaining in formation while girls came running with blankets. They held the blankets up, apparently to shield the dancers from view of the crowds in the plaza. After a wait of half an hour or so, the dancers moved to the north edge of the plaza and halted again, still screened by the blankets, which were held before and about the group during this last short march.

Another group of dancers was gathered on the opposite side of the plaza 300 yards or so to the south, screened behind brush.

We were told by Papagoes that a similar dance was held that noon both in old Santa Rosa and in new Santa Rosa, and that both the Anegam and old Santa Rosa groups were now waiting for the new Santa Rosa group to arrive. During this wait the Anegam men lay down on the ground and rested.

796 417 The dance ground here was laid out between two NW-SE trending lines of houses, a hundred or more yards apart. A square enclosure of cane and tall arrowweed, neatly tied between horizontal poles into

17:Castetter & Underhill N.E-5 (1931-1934) 1935
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231 When the Jesuits left the country most of these animals went wild, as did those of mining towns and ranches deserted through fear of the Apaches. Thus the "Pimas" early had an opportunity to secure and train horses for themselves, and this was beginning even in Kino's own time. "A few (cattle from frontier posts) remained and went wild. The mares produced colts and these the Pimas caught and raised" (18, p. 246).

The nomadic desert people seem to have had little share in this early horse era. In tales told of the grandfathers [481] of old informants, men were still going about the country by running thirty to fifty miles a day and war parties 726 were conducted on foot, "because the Apaches got horses 231 before we did." As the Apaches were gradually subdued by the Federal Government communication grew easier and horse owning spread. On the last war parties in which fathers of informants took part, horses were the rule. At [492] present scarcely any man is without a horse and many families have a wagon and team. In 1931 there were 10,700 horses to 2,679 men (21).

231 Cattle were taken up much less easily. The wild ones were killed for their meat, and especially their hide which has been the material for Papago shields and sandals for two hundred years. The Federal Government has made a policy of giving the Papagos cattle on credit, and in 1931 there were 22,930 head of grade cattle to a population of 5,228 (21). Thus riding the range has succeeded hunting as the occupation of the average young man.

433 flooding and grasshoppers is won. This subsistence
24 scale, risky enterprise cannot long compete against
[461] the surplus-over-subsistence earned in the cotton fields.

The crops Desert People working in the 1950 cotton harvest did plant on the reserves were not even on a subsistence scale. The few beans or squash, the patch of melons they actually planted were no more than a supplement at most.

464 Clearly an important reason Papagos sell their la-
471 bor is that a high proportion do not even have flood
423 farms where they could try to farm if they wished to. Probably nearly half the Desert People picking cotton in 1950 had no fields.[1]

232 For Papagos who cannot farm, there is still a
433 possibility of raising cattle. However, xerophytic
[137] desert vegetation is not particularly well suited to
[132] fattening cattle--thorns don't make fat. Rainfall on reserve lands is very scanty, and good stands of grass are small and undependable.

231 Among Papago cotton pickers of 1950, nearly half
422 the families owned cattle.[2] However, some of them actually had only 1 cow, and the average number of head owned by each family was only a dozen.[3]

One difficulty for Papago cattlemen is that horses are kept by most families, taking up range that could support more beef animals. These horses are not especially good stock--no one raises horses for export, but the Desert People are still mainly in the pre-
[492] automotive age of transportation. If they don't walk,
[493] they generally must ride horseback or in a wagon pulled by horses. Over three-fourths of Papago cotton pickers in 1950 owned horses.[4] And each of these families kept
[27] 6 or 7 horses.[5] If it were not for an ordinance of the
[246] Papago Tribal Council restricting each family to not more than 10 head of horses, horse population of the reserved lands would undoubtedly be much higher.

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[1] 150 families gave information. 80 had their own fields, or 61%. (Only 8 were in irrigated projects, 6%) Families of 8 younger men had flood fields, 6%. So 41% had no flood fields in their extended family.
[2] 19 families of 40 questions owned cattle, 47½%.
[3] 56 families giving information owned 96 head, averaging 19 per family.
[4] 431 families of 40 questioned owned horses, 77½%.
[5] 21 families giving data owned 130, averaging 6.6 each.